000 Asiatic nations, and as early as the time of the Russo-Japanese War the Annamites had planted lotuses in their fields in her honour. With the Annamites, the Siamese, and the Indonesians the movements were internal and did not at this stage threaten conflict with adjacent peoples of a similar mind. But with the Chinese it was different. They were living in the midst of native peoples, holding fast to economic power and at the same time creating a nationalistic *imperium in imperio*. Hitherto through the centuries there had been no special problem of the Chinese (even though their functions had aroused resentment) and within three generations Chinese settlers had been absorbed into the native community. Now it was otherwise. The increase in immigration, the improved means of transport between China and the Nanyang, the approach to equalization in the sex ratio (more Chinese women were accompanying their men) were key factors in the change. Intermarriage, so far a guarantee of absorption, was decreasing; in Malaya it had practically ceased for more than a generation so that the barrier between the races was complete. It was no wonder that there was now a Chinese problem.

Nor was the problem limited to a single clear-cut issue. Communism had come to China early in the twenties, and its adherents had formed the left wing of the Kuomintang. After the purge of that party by Chiang Kai-shek in 1927 they had split off into their own organizations. Southeast Asia had, besides its merchants and traders, a large proletarian community of Chinese for whom Communism had a promise and an appeal. Wages (though much higher than in China) were low; conditions were far from ideal; trade-union organization was rudimentary and machinery for bargaining barely existent. In Malaya, in particular, land-hungry Chinese squatters with no security of tenure were ready to support any movement which would guarantee them the possession of this land. A determined minority of fanatics, such as the real Communists were, had a great field to exploit.

● 668 Before the Second World War, Communism in Southeast Asia had been kept in effective check by the Governments; but during the Japanese occupation of the countries of Southeast Asia, Chinese Communists took part in resistance movements, notably in Malaya where they formed guerrilla units. As such, they became the temporary allies of the South East Asia Command, but directly after the Japanese surrender they demonstrated their intransigent

2:Purcell G-4 (no date) 1951 AL1 Southeast Asia AL1
Chinese



hostility to the Military Administration and, after it, to the civil Governments of the Malayan Union and Singapore which succeeded it. 668 ●

Before the war, the Kuomintang had found its chief support in the mercantile class of Chinese. During the Japanese occupation of the Nanyang this class, being urban and static, was an easy prey for Japanese exactions and for this reason its members, after the liberation, were denounced by the Communists as 'collaborators'. They, themselves, had either remained underground and unnoticed because of their lack of property or, in Malaya, in the case of about 3,000–4,000 only out of a total population of over two million, had become guerrillas in the jungle. The post-liberation result of the situation in this country was that many of the old leaders of the Chinese community were, at least temporarily, discredited and the Communists claimed credit for all resistance to the Japanese. After a while, however, the Kuomintang and the San Min Chu I Youth began to reassert themselves, but they had lost much of their pre-war vigour. The course of the civil war in China and the deterioration of the National Government's position had much to do with the change.

In Indonesia and Indochina, where the purely proletarian element among the Chinese was much smaller, the developments after the Japanese had surrendered placed the Chinese in an unenviable position. In Indonesia the 'middleman' nature of so much of the Chinese activity had made them unpopular with the natives, and during the periods after 1945 when the Dutch were in conflict with the Indonesian Republic neither side was able to afford them adequate protection from the aggression of local communities. Uncontrolled elements in the population (often soldiers) massacred the Chinese in considerable numbers. They were, in particular, accused of espionage for the Dutch. It seems, however, that it was the Dutch who afforded them the best protection and with whom, generally speaking, Chinese sympathies therefore lay. In Indochina, where there was also a considerable animus against the Chinese trader and money-lender (i.e. goods-lender), the community suffered greatly in the disorders and in the civil war which was still continuing in 1949. The French, to afford them protection, and to suit their own strategic dispositions, concentrated them in a few centres, notably in Saigon-Cholon where there was much overcrowding. At the same time many other Chinese

609 186 668

2:Purcell G-4 (no date) 1951 AL1 Southeast Asia AL1
Chinese



668 moved to Vietminh-controlled areas, and the Vietminh could
609 claim a considerable number of supporters among the younger Chinese.

186 The advances of militant nationalism in some others of the Southeast Asian countries had made the widespread fear of Chinese economic encroachment a ready source of political capital. In both Siam and the Philippines measures to diminish the Chinese share of the retail trade which had been initiated before the war were now intensified and an anti-Chinese plank was inevitable in the platform of every political party. Chinese Communists were said meanwhile to be actively assisting the Hukbalahaps, the agrarian insurgents in Luzon.

668 This was the dilemma in which the Chinese still found them-
669 selves in the fourth year after the Japanese defeat. But in one country, Malaya, their difficulties as a community became most acute when the Malayan Communist Party, consisting itself mostly of Chinese, decided in June 1948 to start an active terrorist campaign against the British. The constitutional experiment of the Malayan Union followed by that of the Federation of Malaya had left the Chinese generally in a state of political apathy (since the new constitution greatly favoured the Malays at their expense). When the terrorists, who were largely the old guerrillas of the Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army, struck, it was the Chinese themselves who provided most of the casualties on both sides. Many *Towkays* (Chinese business men) were intimidated into contributing to the Communists' funds or supplying them with goods and, being largely isolated, were not in a position to resist these demands. This in turn brought them into conflict with the British authorities. The Chinese squatter community, too, being on the fringe of the jungle was readily utilized by the terrorists and suffered accordingly when British troops and police took reprisals against their villages, burning down their houses and destroying
000 their crops. Many squatters were banished to China. The great danger the British ran was that harsh measures might antagonize large sections of the population, for the government of a great majority by a small minority must ultimately depend upon the consent of the governed. Large-scale measures of varying success were in progress against the terrorists in 1949 when the defeat of the Chinese Nationalist armies by those of the Communists in China and the collapse of the Kuomintang Government gave new

2:Purcell G-4 (no date) 1951 AL1 Southeast Asia AL1
Chinese



their native country; moreover they have a stubbornness of disposition which distinguishes them from their fellow Chinese. (It is worthy of note that the most numerous among the early Communists in the Nanyang were the Hailams and Hakkas.)[1]

Sun Yat-sen said: 'The Chinese people are of the Han or Chinese race with common blood, common language, common religion, and common customs—a single race.' As regards 'blood' in any scientific sense this is manifestly untrue; on the contrary,

> The modern Chinese people is an amalgamation of many elements originally different from one another. . . . In colour; in stature, above all in cephalic indices, about 42 per cent are mesocephalic and about 43 per cent are brachycephalic, and about 15 per cent dolichocephalic. Even these classes are distinctly subdivided into dolicho-leptorrhinic and dolicho-platyrrhinic. There is also a low-headed type, and, in the South, a trace of a dwarf element. . . . Prehistory points to a race already mixed in the basin of the Yellow River. . . .[2]

In spite, however, of a number of modifications and reservations, the remainder of the statement of the Father of the Revolution, especially regarding religion and customs, could be convincingly maintained. Allowing for the numerous variations which have been suggested above, the Chinese of Southeast Asia, drawn mostly from Fukien and Kwangtung, are quite remarkably homogeneous. Not only have they marked physical characteristics in common; their customs, their religion, their attitude of mind have an almost uncanny similarity. What Clement Williams remarked of their shops in Bhamo on the Yunnan-Burma frontier nearly ninety years ago—'the likeness of one Burmese to another is striking, but the absolute sameness of one Chinese shop to another is truly wonderful'—is equally true of the 'sameness' of Chinese temples, houses, ornaments, customs, methods of mining and agriculture, and handicrafts all over the Southeast Asian area, from the city of Cholon to a remote *tienda* in Mindanao, or from the tin-fields of Larut to the pepper plantations of Cambodia. Nor is this merely a superficial impression (such as 'all Chinese look alike'); it derives from their common steeping in Chinese culture, even though the latter's springs of inspiration have ceased to well up from the depths and it has been for long (as Professor Toynbee says) in a state of petrification.

[1] See p. 370 regarding the Japanese identification of Hailams with Communism.

[2] *China Year Book* 1932

2:Purcell G-4 (no date) 1951 AL1 Southeast Asia AL1
Chinese



The essential nature of the overseas Chinese is, however, one thing: the traits of their character brought out by subjection to differing pressures and influences are another. In particular, the larger part of the area has for a long period been under the domination of European colonial Powers which, in spite of recent developments, to a considerable degree still maintain their hold. In the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaya, Burma, British Borneo, and Indochina the Chinese have been subordinated to the colonial policies of Spain, Portugal, the Netherlands, Britain, France, and the United States. In Siam, the solitary country to retain independence throughout (though she, too, was moulded by pressures from the West), the Chinese immigrants contributed to the well-being of the Siamese by their services and the admixture of their blood, but it was always the native aristocracy that held the power and, since 1932, the middle-class native revolutionaries. In post-liberation Burma the Chinese are a small minority who must leave the issues to be decided amongst the Burmese parties and communities; in Indonesia they are often uncomfortably at the point of impact of the opposing forces; in Indochina their plight is much the same. In Malaya the upshot of constitutional experiment and the campaign of Communist terrorists of their own race has placed them in a dilemma.

Throughout most of the period of our survey it has been a tenet of the Chinese that they should leave political policy and administration to the local Government, and this remains so in principle in spite of the increasing influence of nationalism and, latterly, of Communism in their midst. The outworn, but still, until recently, serviceable dictum that 'the Chinese don't mind who holds the cow so long as they milk it' has been true of all purely mercantile communities since the dawn of history, and virtually the same remark is indeed made by Communists of capitalism—that it does not mind who governs so long as it draws the profits. But with the growth of the Chinese communities in the Nanyang and the development within them of political awareness the saying has been becoming less and less true.

From the fifteenth to the nineteenth century the Chinese in Southeast Asia found themselves, first in the Philippines, next in Indonesia, then in Malaya, and finally in Indochina, called upon to adapt themselves to a superstructure of government devised by completely strange and alien nations. These nations

2:Purcell G-4 (no date) 1951 AL1 Southeast Asia AL1
Chinese
China AFI



of circuit of the Manchu dynasty related the details of criminal cases. There was a common offence which did not seem to come under the specific provisions of the penal code but was nevertheless heavily penalized, and it was known as 'being involved'. It appeared that to 'be involved', even quite innocently, in the felonies and misdemeanours of others, was itself in the nature of a crime. Indeed this feeling of the blameworthiness of being mixed up in any offence, tragedy, or lawlessness went right through Chinese society. It was not altogether unusual to hear of a Chinese man or woman hanging him- or herself on the doorpost of someone against whom they had a grievance in order to 'involve' him (there would be a judicial inquiry which would, at least, cause the owner of the door great embarrassment), for 'responsibility' is a far-reaching principle in China. This convention was hostile to the growth of public spirit, for a Chinese who saw a crime being committed, or a person in danger or needing assistance, would very likely do nothing for fear of 'being involved'.

This characteristic has persevered down to the present day, and, coupled with a willingness to pay for a quiet life, has been responsible for many Chinese difficulties. Chinese secret societies were able to parcel out the towns and villages in the Nanyang and to exact 'protection money' from shopkeepers and others without effective protest; in a similar way the Chinese community as a whole was willing to conform to all the laws and regulations made by alien Western Governments (whether to them they made sense or not) in return for being left alone. It was the social wisdom of 'Brer Rabbit, he say nuffin''. It was only when regulations proved to be unbearably vexatious that there was an outburst of hysteria followed by calm. This arrangement, convenient to both sides, was responsible for the saying of Gustaaf Schlegel cited above. It is an irony that this very quality, so convenient to European administrators in the past, as we have seen has brought down so much criticism on the heads of the Chinese *Towkays* in Malaya who, unprotected from reprisals, have paid 'protection' money to the Communist terrorists of their own race.

It seems true to say, then, that at the beginning of the twentieth century the Governments of Southeast Asia were conscious of the Chinese as a 'useful' element in their economic systems, and though they had some unpleasant social peculiarities they in no way constituted a danger or a threat. Chinese labour was introduced

2:Purcell G-4 (no date) 1951 AL1 Southeast Asia AL1
Chinese
ChinaAF1



in quantity into the colonial possessions and received the praise that is reserved for an efficient and well-oiled machine. But a movement was already incubating which was to change the whole attitude towards the Chinese of Europeans and indigenous peoples alike. The birth of Chinese nationalism coincided with the numbers of the Chinese emigrants reaching a new high level.

Sun Yat-sen in his *Three Principles of the People* said (as Mazzini had said long before him) that 'nationalism must precede internationalism'. Continuing the passage on race already quoted in part earlier in this chapter he went on:

> But the Chinese have no national spirit; they only know the family and clan groups. Thus China is only a loose sheet of sand. Our position is extremely perilous—if we do not promote nationalism and weld together our four hundred million into a nation, we face a tragedy—the loss of our country and the destruction of our race.[1]

This warning was taken very much to heart by Young China, though the process towards national consciousness had already gone a long way before Sun Yat-sen crystallized the sentiment in these words. The effect of the intense nationalist campaign coupled with an education drive was to make the Chinese everywhere conscious of their separateness as a race and nation, and, in Southeast Asia, to render the peoples among whom they lived aware that they regarded themselves as a race and nation apart. Almost simultaneously the seed of nationalism had been sown in the hearts of the other races and they were beginning to feel that they, in their turn, faced a tragedy—unless they, too, promoted nationalism and welded themselves into a nation, they might suffer the loss of their country and the destruction of their race.

The simultaneous growth of two such sentiments within one country meant that the communities grew nationalistic spines which when they were erected pricked their neighbours painfully. It was like Schopenhauer's definition of human beings as 'hedgehogs nestling together for warmth'. And the 'warmth' they sought in common (if such a metaphor can properly be used of countries sweltering in intense tropical heat) was the livelihood that Southeast Asia had, so far, abundantly afforded. But with large-scale immigration came competition, and the growth of economic rivalry between the races was coincident with the growth of nationalism.

[1] Lecture 1.

2:Purcell G-4 (no date) 1951 AL1 Southeast Asia AL1
Chinese
China AF1



made against the Chinese 'on their own merits', we do not regard it as at all an irrelevant question to ask 'Who made them?' Apart from a late King of Siam, the persons who have taken it on themselves to indict the Chinese for their alleged shortcomings are nearly all Europeans. Some are administrators, or ex-administrators with even more settled prejudices, some are merchants (though these tend, through greater contact with and therefore greater knowledge of the Chinese, to be fairer to them than the first-named), and some (including the most vitriolic) are mere tourists. The author would say that he has never encountered a European qualified by an adequate knowledge of the language and customs of the Chinese and by long experience of them who delivered himself of downright judgements or sweeping condemnation of that race. Indeed knowledge of the Chinese almost invariably induces a sympathy for them and their difficulties, however much it may be tempered by momentary exasperation or by realization of some personal or collective shortcoming. A reason for the anti-Chinese bias is often that the speaker has identified himself completely with some native race afraid of the Chinese and thus he shares and intensifies the natives' fears and resentments. Another common reason, no doubt, for the charges is that the vices ascribed to the Chinese—shrewdness, foresight, business acumen, keeping one's own counsel—are counted as virtues in the City of London, in Amsterdam, Paris, or New York, and that the indictment of the Chinese race is unconsciously inspired by fear of successful competition.

But when all these counts are disposed of there remain two which, on the face of them, are much more plausible and which deserve careful scrutiny. One is the charge of 'forming combinations obstructive to government' and of 'creating enclaves of Chinese nationalism in the countries they inhabit'.

There is no doubt that the Chinese have a strong protective clannishness which has kept them intact as a community. This in the past, however, did no particular harm to the communities around them and indeed insulated the latter from Chinese internal conflicts. Moreover their intermarriage with the native population meant that the absorption of their descendants into the native community was only a matter of time. But with the advent of Nationalism the position began to change rapidly. An almost physical wall began to raise itself between the Chinese and the native community.

2:Purcell G-4 (no date) 1951 AL1 Southeast Asia AL1
Chinese
China AFI



native community. The Chinese National Government manifested an increasing solicitude for the *Hua Ch'iao*, the overseas Chinese, whom it regards almost as its children; it instructed its consular officials to register all the Chinese within their jurisdiction, and they sent missions to inspect every activity of overseas Chinese life. What is more, the Chinese Government took upon itself to direct the education of Chinese in the Nanyang, laying down the curriculum to be followed, and even introducing a system of grants-in-aid in competition with that of the local Government. It often happened that remote officials in Nanking or Chungking, very likely originating from one of the northern provinces and completely out of touch and sympathy with the Chinese of the Nanyang, claimed the right to direct their affairs. Even ethnically speaking the overseas Chinese might be nearer to the Siamese or Burmese, or (by intermarriage) to the Indonesians, than to a Chinese from Honam or Kansu. It was no wonder that Siam, Malaya, and the other countries of Southeast Asia saw an *imperium in imperio* growing up in their midst and began to fear for their own eventual safety.

This development, then, we are constrained to regard as in many ways a misfortune for the overseas Chinese and for the countries in which they had made their home or wherein they were sojourners. It arrested assimilation and erected a racial wall. At the same time the simultaneous growth of local nationalism encouraged the Chinese to look to their own country for protection—a protection, it turned out, it was, because of its own internal division and weakness as a Power, in no position to give. Nor did the authorities in the one country of Southeast Asia where the Chinese now were the majority community offer any real encouragement to the local-born Chinese to regard Malaya as their own country and to resist the claims to control their destinies by a remote Government in a country they had never seen. The chance to extend the teaching of English to the community was lost and for thousands the only means of receiving an education of any sort was in the Chinese Nationalist schools; the doors of the Malayan civil service were opened to Malays but not to Chinese; the whole policy of Federated and Unfederated Malay States was, and is still, pro-Malay. It was surely no wonder that the Malayan-born Chinese who, while proud of their Chinese ancestry and culture, wished to identify themselves and their

2:Purcell G-4 (no date) 1951 AL1 Southeast Asia AL1
Chinese
China AFI



children's future with Malaya alone, were attracted to, or forced into, the Nationalist camp.

Malaya has for long been the 'test case' of Chinese affairs and a focus of interest in Southeast Asia. The situation as it was tending was very clearly described by a distinguished traveller many years ago; Professor Arnold Toynbee records the impression of his visit to the Straits Settlements in these words:

> And China is not only enormous already; it is rapidly getting more enormous (if logically that adjective can be put in the comparative degree). When I touched at the Straits Settlements on my way out east I realized that British Malaya is destined, by 'peaceful penetration', to become a Chinese province, and I fancy, from what I have heard, that the same destiny may be in store for Burma, Siam, French Indo-China, Dutch Indonesia, and the Philippines. In the end the current of Chinese expansion in the Tropics will meet the current of Hindu expansion over the submerged heads of the smaller and weaker and less efficient peoples in between, who are already fast going under. And, after what has happened, I surmise that the new frontier between China and India will tend, slowly but surely, to travel westward at India's expense and in China's favour.

What happened in Malaya, we cannot too frequently remind ourselves, was not the result of military conquest, not the territorial spoils of a Kublai Khan, but because the British had welcomed the immigration of a couple of million Chinese. For long after the intervention in the Malay States it had been found difficult to attract the British capital needed for the opening up of the country: it was not until a plentiful supply first of Indian and then of Chinese labour was assured that such capital was forthcoming, and it was not until the end of the 1920s that there was any control at all of Chinese immigration.

The British Colonial Office and the Malayan Governments must have seen that the admission of Chinese in such numbers that they would eventually be the majority community was bound to create a problem of tremendous magnitude. Even the degree of assimilation taking place in Siam and Indochina was out of the question because of the barrier of the Mohammedan religion. The only hope now for the future of Malaya in the interest of its diverse peoples was to promote a feeling of common Malayan citizenship to counter the claim, tacit or express, of Chinese Nationalism to consider Malaya as a new province of China. In the pre-war years

2:Purcell G-4 (no date) 1951 AL1 Southeast Asia AL1
Chinese
China AF1



this was a policy which the British neglected to pursue with any conviction, and the post-war experiment in this direction, the Malayan Union, was abandoned at the first sign of opposition. Unless a true 'Malayan citizenship' can be made effective, the ideal of a Malayan nation forming, as it were, a buffer State between China, Indonesia, and India, with bonds with all three but belonging to none, will remain a phantom.

In the present crisis the great and deplorable weakness of the Chinese in Southeast Asia is the absence of effective leadership (and the few notable exceptions to this generalization do not affect its truth). This is due in large part to the fact that there has grown up no Chinese middle class of sufficient proportions to provide disinterested, well-educated, and competent individuals in the numbers needed to guide their community through the reefs of politics towards a safe anchorage. The business leaders are so busy making money (or endeavouring not to lose it) that few of them have time to devote to public affairs even if they had the will and the knowledge. In Malaya, at least, the Indian stands in sharp contrast to the Chinese, and in Singapore Indian representation on the various bodies is vastly greater in proportion to their numbers than is the case with the much more numerous Chinese. This is not explicable solely by Chinese political pique but must be due largely to the training in politics and administration the Indians received in their own country during the British Raj. In Malaya, Indonesia, and Indochina the British, Dutch, and French have neglected to afford opportunities for the Chinese residents to acquire a knowledge of affairs. The penalty of this neglect is that now, when European control is loosening, the mass of the Chinese have few leaders to take control and to consolidate their community in face of the Communist advance. The lack of experience and education determines also the quality of the Communist leadership in these regions. Among the Malayan Communists are no Mao Tse-tungs or Chou En-lais and scarcely any individuals with more than the rudimentary mis-education obtainable in Chinese vernacular schools. The result is that the old professional bandit (always a feature of Malaya's jungle-fringe) is more prominent than he would otherwise be, and terrorism is unmitigated by constructive politics. Is it, therefore, strange that in 1949 the majority of Nanyang Chinese were 'sitting on the fence' awaiting the final upshot in China and its repercussions overseas? In such

2:Purcell G-4 (no date) 1951 AL1 Southeast Asia AL1
Chinese
China AFI



circumstances a handful of Chinese Communists, many of them uneducated youths with a strong professional bandit element as just mentioned, had almost complete freedom of action through the time-honoured weapons of intimidation and extortion. With this insidious pressure, and with little support or sympathy from the European Powers or the native peoples, the Chinese of Southeast Asia were indeed in a dilemma.

With the advent of militant Communism came a final complication to the lives of the overseas Chinese. The appeal of the Communists is to the idea of a society horizontally but not vertically divided—that is, divided into classes, but with a proletariat which cuts across racial and community divisions. So far this appeal had been listened to by only a small minority of the Chinese, and with the Malays and other races it had been an almost complete failure. But let no one underestimate the attraction it might have for the masses of Southeast Asia if they were simultaneously convinced of the sincerity of the Communist professions and of the bankruptcy of 'bourgeois' promises.

The only way to stem the advance of Communism in Southeast Asia is to raise the standard of living. The irony of such a course for the colonial Powers is that in promoting a rise in the standard of living they are hastening their own departure. Improved material welfare stimulates political awareness. Whereas in the grand old days of their trading companies they could lord it over a province with a garrison of a score of soldiers, to-day with armies of a hundred thousand they remain only on sufferance. It is of no use, however, their elder statesmen and administrators of a bygone age urging the Governments to 'go slow'. The idea of representative government came from the West, but the rate of approach to it is largely fixed by the peoples themselves. All that the colonial Powers can aim at is to leave their ex-dependencies able to decide their own future and not at the mercy of new imperialisms.

We take leave of the Chinese in Southeast Asia at a time when they are undergoing one of the greatest trials in their history. The whole of the Far East is disintegrating as it moves towards a new and mysterious synthesis. These emigrants belong to a race which for at least one hundred and twenty generations, through the rise, flowering, decline, and petrifaction of the Chinese culture, has preserved a unified attitude of mind towards life and reality, and they look towards their parent civilization and see it once more in

2: Purcell G-4 (no date) 1951 AL1 Southeast Asia AL1
Chinese
China AFI

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648
668

## POSTSCRIPT

AN article in *Ta Kung Pao*, the Shanghai newspaper, of 28 January 1950 was taken as adumbrating the future policy of the People's Government towards Chinese overseas and the governments of Southeast Asia. It began by saying:

> Now that the People's Republic of China has been established and diplomatic relations have been opened between the Central People's Government and a number of other countries, the more than 10,000,000 overseas Chinese shall and must not be subjected to further abuse.

The article pointed out that it was clearly stipulated in Article 58 of the Common Programme that 'the Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China shall do its utmost to protect the legitimate rights and interests of Chinese residing abroad'. In pursuance of this principle, the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs had lodged strong protests with the French and Thai authorities against the abuse of Chinese nationals. The article was particularly concerned to attack the Thai and French governments. 'The Fascist elements in Thailand [it said] have a long record of outrageous action in the persecution of Chinese nationals, and for years Thailand has been a veritable hell to the overseas Chinese there.' Malaya received only incidental mention. 'But [the article continued] going back a little, we find that countless numbers of Chinese have been murdered in the Dutch East Indies during the past few years. All in all, the annals of the struggles of the overseas Chinese may be considered to be written in blood. It must be evident that it is impossible for overseas Chinese to live in peace under imperialistic rule. . . . We know full well that the indiscriminate bombing of Shanghai together with the persecution of Chinese nationals in Thailand, Indochina, and Malaya, are all part of an imperialist plot for both direct and indirect attack against the Chinese people.'

Peking radio thereafter systematically attacked the Southeast Asian governments for their alleged ill treatment of the overseas Chinese. In the case of Malaya it was noticeable that direct mention of the terrorist campaign was avoided in the ensuing months.

The diplomatic position in August 1950 was that Burma and Indonesia had recognized the People's Government of China and representatives were being exchanged, Britain had also recognized the People's Government but negotiations for the terms on which representatives would be exchanged were still in dilatory progress, while France, Thailand, and the Philippines still recognized the Nationalist Government which was then taking refuge in Formosa.

[p. 693]

2:Purcell G-4 (no date) 1951 AL1 Southeast Asia AL1
Chinese
China AF1
Burma AP1



A visit to Southeast Asia during the third quarter of 1950 after an absence of nearly three years brought home to the writer the accelerated tempo of the change that the countries were undergoing, and, in particular, the dominant role which the politics of China were playing therein. As a tailpiece to this survey he has recorded the impressions of his visit, bringing the account as nearly up to date as the exigencies of publishing would allow. The observations are set down in the order in which the countries were visited.

In his many discussions with statesmen, diplomats, officials, business men, and others in these Southeast Asian countries, the writer became aware of a considerable disagreement among them regarding the number of Chinese in the area. There was, in the case of Siam and Indochina in particular, no figure that was generally accepted. The definition of 'Chinese' was an initial difficulty (as it has so often been in the course of this survey) for many Chinese appeared to possess a dual racial character, discarding one aspect and assuming the other as circumstances suggested.[1] It seemed also that that clandestine immigration into Siam, Indochina, and the Philippines and (perhaps) Indonesia within the last two or three years, had been very considerable, for during this period the immigration laws had been greatly tightened. The writer was compelled, therefore, to revise the estimates he had made in the demographic chapters of the survey to suit the probable facts of 1950 and to adopt a total not very far short of 10 million ethnic Chinese for the whole of Southeast Asia. This estimate, however, does not materially alter the ratio of Chinese to other races in the area and has no very important bearing on the general political and economic considerations which have been described in the text.

*Burma.* In July 1950 the Chinese Nationalist ambassador had left Burma, and one other official of the embassy had also gone away, but the remainder of both the embassy and consular staff had agreed to serve under the People's Government of China which was now recognized by the Burmese Government. Two of the staff had already been summoned to Peking for indoctrination. The new ambassador, Dr Yu, was expected to arrive in Rangoon in August. In the meantime the staffs were not being paid and the only income available was that derived from the sale of (Nationalist) passports.

At this time an incident in the Burmese Shan State of Keng-tung near Siam was the subject of a number of rumours. A force of Chinese

[1] Thus in Siam, the President of the Thai Chamber of Commerce, of very obvious Chinese race or extraction but with a Thai name, denounced vehemently the tactics of business men of acknowledged Chinese nationality in their dealings with the Thais.

10: Thompson S-4 (no date)1947 ALl Southeast Asia ALl

Chinese Indians



years of the present century, the flow of immigration has been large and comparatively steady except during the depression and the two world wars. Chinese and Indian immigrants usually could better their position soon after arrival because their industry and organization were superior to those of the indigenous peoples. Partly because of this, there were constantly new arrivals willing to do coolie work until they too could rise economically. Except for the large-scale repatriations to China and India caused by the depression, the flow of labor thus set into motion was adequate for the economy prevailing in the underpopulated areas until changing conditions created a growing class of landless proletariat and dissatisfaction among both the indigenous and immigrant peoples. This dissatisfaction often became associated with other motivations in nationalist movements.

Controlled migrations occurred only between regions under the same government or those held by governments of the same nationality, except for a limited migration of Javanese labor to Malaya (and to New Caledonia). In the Netherlands Indies and in Indochina the governments endeavored to transplant groups of laborers from overpopulated to underpopulated areas, but in so doing they learned that the process required careful organization, was expensive, and raised serious economic, social, and psychological problems. Such movements could be effected successfully on a limited scale only. This fact obviated the possibility of their contributing substantially to solution of the problem of overpopulation. As labor supply, such migrations were only temporarily satisfactory, because social and religious ties inclined the workers to return to their home villages immediately upon the expiration of their contracts or even to desert. To stabilize this labor force some of the governments tried after the depression to obtain a better adjusted sex ratio in the migrant population by encouraging the immigration of workers' families and the establishment of agricultural villages—a program too recently initiated to make possible a definite appraisal of its comparative success or failure. In Malaya, with the exception of a few Javanese, planned immigration was confined to Indian laborers. It was arranged and operated jointly by the two British governments concerned. There, however, the depression, the growth in voluntary Indian immigration, and India's ban in 1938 on assisted emigration to Malaya tended to render many of the official controls unnecessary. The unplanned and uncontrolled movement of labor across the Burma-India frontier was the sole migration of its type in Southeast Asia.

The indigenous populations in general hold themselves socially aloof from the alien Asiatics. To the Muslim Malays the Chinese were materialistic, pork-eating idolators; and the Indians, with the exception of the small Islamic minority, were similarly disdained, though regarded as less aggressive. To the sinicized Annamites, the Burmese, and the Siamese,

10: Thompson S-4 (no date)1947 ALl Southeast Asia ALl



religion was no barrier between themselves and the Chinese; all were Buddhists, though of differing sects. Chinese culture had long been admired by the peoples of Farther India, and had influenced them. Moreover, the Chinese were regarded as distant and desirable relatives. With the advent, however, of Chinese women and the accelerated growth of Chinese nationalism after the first world war, intermarriage occurred less frequently (though it continued to be common in Burma and Cambodia), and the indigenous peoples had few social contacts with the Chinese in their midst. The cleavage between the ethnic groups was further widened in the British colonies by the official policy of representation of various communities on legislative and advisory bodies.

Economically, relations between the indigenous and the immigrant peoples altered from a mosaic of non-conflicting occupations to one of rapidly increasing competition. For years the native peoples had contentedly seen the arrival of thousands of immigrants annually who were able and willing to perform the hard labor for which they themselves had neither inclination nor compulsion. Through much of the region, however, during the inter-war period an indigenous proletariat was developing as a result of the transfer of farm land from the indebted native peasantry to non-agriculturists, often to alien moneylenders, and also because of the growth of a Western-inspired individualism which was weakening family ties once paramount. The trend was apparent chiefly in parts of Burma, Siam, and Indochina.

This development did not assume significant proportions until the world economic depression, when considerable unemployment arose out of the drop in prices and the curtailment of foreign markets for products of Southeast Asia. The result was a swift increase in the number of natives seeking to return to their villages and, on the other hand, of those forced to seek part-time or full-time employment away from their villages in competition with immigrant laborers for work previously scorned as arduous, monotonous, and underpaid.

Meanwhile the native middle classes for the first time faced a serious unemployment problem. Until the depression years, the opportunities for desirable though moderately paid employment in government or business had seemed to exceed the number of qualified candidates. The depression made it clear that the saturation point had been reached, and each year an increasing number of educated youths would be thwarted in their expectation of employment or, if given a job, in their rise to higher positions. Thus two groups of economically frustrated natives developed simultaneously in numbers and in consciousness in the decade prior to the second world war.

Nascent political factors became significant during that period. The struggles of the Chinese against the Japanese and of Indians against British rule were reflected in the attitudes of the emigrants from those coun-

10: Thompson S-4 (no date)1947 ALl Southeast Asia ALl



Chinese Indians

464 tries. Although this was truer of the immigrant Chinese than of the
668 immigrant Indians, the comparative inertia of the latter was compen-
563 sated for by a more aggressive championship of their cause on the part of their compatriots at home. In the case of Malaya, where the indigenous population was numerically weak and psychologically passive, the Central Indian Association of Malaya and the Congress Party leaders prodded the Government of India to exert pressure upon the officials at Singapore and Kuala Lumpur to grant greater economic and political privileges to the Indians in Malaya. The governments and planters of Malaya, however, with the curtailment in their labor needs resulting from the current cut in rubber export, felt free to resist this pressure, even at the price of the embargo placed in 1938 on emigration to Malaya of assisted Indian labor.

464 In the case of the Chinese the situation was different. Smaller num-
668 bers were employed in the rubber industry and larger ones in mining.
563 More of them were able to graduate from contract labor into other occu-
167 pations, especially retail business, farming, and small trades. They tended to stay longer because of the insecurity of enterprise in south China. Moreover, the home government was in a much weaker position than that of India to exert pressure on the governments of Malaya. These remained free to regulate at their pleasure the spontaneous flow of Chinese immigrants and to keep watch on the political activities of resident Chinese. In Burma, however, the British authorities were unable to keep the situation so well in hand. Serious anti-Indian rioting broke out in 1938, and the strength of the Burman nationalists in the government (especially after separation from India in 1937) enabled it to negotiate an agreement with India restricting the number of Indian immigrants and permitting the exercise of more control over those domiciled in the country.

In Indochina and the Netherlands Indies the governments were able to keep the immigrant problem from assuming intensity because of the smaller proportion of Chinese in relation to the native populations. In all these countries, however, Chinese laborers suffered somewhat from the bad reputation of those of their countrymen who as merchants and moneylenders had acquired an economic power which differed from that of other aliens in that it affected directly and visibly the welfare of large numbers.

464 All the governments, including that of Siam, were compelled by public
668 opinion to exert more control over the immigrant minorities. In so do-
563 ing, they faced unpleasant alternatives. The demand of Chinese and
167 Indian laborers for better working conditions and improved political
468 status was accompanied by a threat to cut off entirely the flow of emigration. Encouraged by nationalist groups, they engaged in strikes and boycotts. If these succeeded, other demands would probably be made; and

10: Thompson S-4 (no date)1947 ALl Southeast Asia ALl
Chinese
Indians



the indigenous peoples were not sufficiently willing, numerous, or skilled to replace the immigrant laborers. A higher wage scale, they feared, might compel many firms either to go out of business or to install expensive machinery. Already local nationalists, succumbing to the philosophy of economic self-sufficiency, were demanding intensive programs of government-aided industrialization. If such demands were acceded to, the industrialists and labor leaders in the home country could be expected to protest strongly against the new competition.

In this complex situation, the colonial governments of Southeast Asia gradually yielded to the popular demands, although loath to abandon their traditional function as instruments of capitalist planning in the home countries. With the exception, however, of the embryonic and ineffective industrial programs of the Siamese and Burmese governments and the more constructive policy of the Netherlands Indies for a planned industrialization, none of the countries did much in this direction. None was forced as yet to consider very seriously that change in colonial relationship which would result from general economic development in the world and specifically from the new role that China and India would inevitably play before long in Southeast Asia. The Japanese invasion interrupted the efforts of local governments toward a solution of these labor problems. It also injected new elements into the situation.

## 2

## LABOR ORGANIZATION IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

FOR VARIOUS REASONS an organized labor movement has never developed in Southeast Asia to notable dimensions. In large part this was because of the predominance of alien, transient, and illiterate labor forces, divided—even when of the same nationality—by geographical and linguistic differences. The Indians were further subdivided by caste and religious sect. The Chinese had a far better family, guild, and secret-society organization; but the antagonisms imported as an integral part of these organizations provoked periodic violence. Later the political and gangster elements which operated within their framework impelled all the governments throughout Southeast Asia to control them severely.

National solidarity among the immigrant labor groups was further broken up by the methods of recruitment and management. Agents and foremen exploited their compatriots for their own personal gain, until the governments concerned were gradually and reluctantly forced to intervene. Asiatic agents behaved much as recruiting agents of emi-

10: Thompson S-4 (no date)1947 ALl Southeast Asia ALl



of unions in industries the operation of which did not directly affect the public order.

The employers' resistance to unionization derived naturally from their desire to have available an abundant supply of cheap labor. They had on their side, as an argument that must weigh heavily with the governments, the involvement which such organizations as existed were believed to have with subversive political parties and leaders. Communism was reported to be rife among the Chinese labor groups. Indian Congress emissaries were supposed to be stirring up the traditionally docile Indian coolies. The growing wave of strikes and riots which occurred during the second part of the inter-war period, particularly in the middle and late 1930's, had the effect of modifying the opposition of the employer groups. Violence or work stoppages often took place without any formulation of demands or without the workers' support of the spokesman theoretically representing their views. At least some employers therefore began to see the advantage of dealing with responsible labor leaders and of forcing any subversive elements in the workers' associations out into the open.

Thus in Malaya, in 1939, legislation was introduced (but not enforced until 1941) authorizing and facilitating the functioning of unions. Employers in Indochina, who also had long opposed unionization, moved similarly in the latter part of the decade toward a recognition of the need for it. In the Netherlands Indies, membership in unions, after a setback in the early 1930's, slowly increased, although by far the largest unions were still composed of government officials and professional men. In Burma, as in Siam, unionization was impeded by the presence of a predominantly alien body of workers to whose welfare the nationals of both countries were either hostile or indifferent. Such organizations as existed survived only insofar as the governments in each country favored them as useful aids in preventing curtailment of production. Their development, however, was controlled lest they harbor elements striving to overthrow the established order.

The loss of their colonies by the Western powers and anti-colonial Japanese propaganda naturally induced a greater consciousness on their part of the existence of labor problems that must be coped with if the larger economic and social programs are to succeed. From the resolutions passed at the International Labour Organization's conference at Philadelphia in 1944,[1] it appears to have been generally recognized that the colonial governments could no longer rely on paternalistic measures or the voluntary cooperation of individual employers.

[1] Bruno Lasker, "A Labor Code for Dependent Peoples," *Far Eastern Survey*, XIII, 12, June 14, 1944, pp. 103-10.

10: Thompson S-4 (no date)1947 ALl Southeast Asia ALl



try, depending on the stage of development reached before the war, the quality of leadership during and after the Japanese occupation, and the degree of authority and stability achieved by the present governments.

While politics are the overwhelming preoccupation everywhere, Indochina and Indonesia have been the scenes of almost continuous warfare since V-J Day and have been unable—judging from the limited information available—to produce strong, cohesive labor movements. Siam, although not badly damaged by Allied bombing, has been absorbed in achieving administrative stability amid internal political rivalries and in maintaining its sovereign status internationally. The basic reasons which prevented the prewar labor movement in Siam from evolving beyond the embryonic stage remain valid. The greatest progress has been made in Burma and Malaya, where labor movements were comparatively well delineated before the war and where subsequent conditions have combined to further their growth.

Nowhere in the area has a labor movement developed without political implications and inspiration. Nationalism, in the embrace of socialism or communism, has been its guiding and dominating force. Political leaders have worked upon laborers as the only have-not group in an area where the majority of the inhabitants are cultivators who possess, or aspire to possess, their own land. It is not accidental that peasant unions have been organized only in Burma, the sole country of the region where absentee and non-agriculturist landlordism has flourished and where there is marked ethnic homogeneity. Labor shortages exist everywhere as a result of the wartime cessation of immigration and the depletion and displacement of existing labor forces, and are aggravated by the desire of business firms to resume their export trade as quickly as possible.

These factors have placed labor in a particularly favorable position. While laborers remain on the whole almost as inarticulate and as closely identified with the mass of the population as before the war, they have acquired a new political consciousness and a sense of their own indispensability, as well as a more aggressive leadership. Everywhere their economic grievances derive from the growing disparity between increasing wages and more rapidly rising living costs and from the absence of consumer goods and adequate housing in urban areas. Their political objectives are those assigned to them by nationalist or communist leaders, who are using labor as the best spearhead available locally for the achievement of their own goals.

At the present time Malaya and Burma have the only labor movements in the area worthy of the name. Their prewar economies differed widely—Malaya's resembling that of Sumatra more than Burma—but their metropolitan power is parallel and both are committed to a pro-labor policy. They are the two countries of Southeast Asia which have

10: Thompson S-4 (no date)1947 ALl Southeast Asia ALl



been traditionally most dependent on imported labor and their prewar labor movements were the most highly developed of any throughout the region.

Nevertheless, the labor movements in these two countries have taken different paths. Burma is made up of one predominant race, overwhelmingly agricultural and guided by strong nationalist leadership. Development of solidarity among Malaya's laboring class has been retarded by the tripartite ethnic composition of its population and by the country's traditional dependence upon two export industries. Accordingly, Malaya's labor movement has developed schismatic tendencies bordering on mutual hostility and has been influenced by alien Asiatic leadership. While in both countries the British Government has not as yet formulated any policy toward immigrant workers and has thus played into the hands of labor, already in short supply, the effects in the two countries have been quite different. Because of Malaya's lack of a self-sufficient economy, its laborers are in a more favorable position to press their demands. At the same time they suffer from serious internal weaknesses not found in Burma. The government and private firms in Malaya—if the planting-mining economy is to survive—will have to make greater concessions in order to reconstitute an adequate labor force than will the analogous authorities in Burma and Siam.

The special composition of Malaya's population and the organization of its industries are probably responsible for the development of its labor movement from many small unions, organized by subdivisions within trades, into a central association. This pyramidal set-up has been turned upside down in Burma, where labor was at first organized on a very broad basis and then divided into smaller units. In both areas the British Government has been making a marked effort to foster labor unions and at the same time to divorce them from political programs and ideologies. But since the nationalists throughout the area have chosen the labor movement as their chief medium for the achievement of the socio-political revolution they desire, it is unlikely that this attempt will prove successful. The laborers of Southeast Asia still feel themselves to be, above all, members of their own national or ethnic communities and have only secondarily developed a consciousness of a class apart. The whole area is too little industrialized to be fertile ground for a labor movement, strictly speaking. When trade unionism is discussed in referring to the labor movements now budding in Southeast Asia, it should be borne in mind that little more than its nomenclature has been borrowed from Occidental labor organization.

Throughout Southeast Asia the various governments have begged two outstanding questions affecting local labor problems—agricultural indebtedness and land tenancy, and the control of Asiatic immigration. In regard to the former, nothing has been done thus far and one can

18; Firth E-4 (no date) 1950 ALI Southeast Asia ALI



nearing the end of its historical phase. How far it is likely to be replaced by a more insidious form of satellitism is not relevant here. But to talk about political emancipation of South East Asia being the prime requirement for the solution of the problems of the peasantry must not obscure the economic factors involved. Nor is fresh capital all that is needed. For the economy of the peasant to attain a relative stability a great development of technical and administrative skills in the commercial field is necessary. The building of a native professional class would seem to be an important element in the construction of a more integrated economic and political system. To concentrate attention on the political factors alone is to overlook the fact that most of the sinews of the economic organism are now provided by the one group which does not have overt political power—the Chinese.

What remains of the traditional class structure in South East Asian society is not of much avail as a defence of the peasant from alien exploitation. In any case, though the rulers and traditional nobility still command much respect, and provide symbols for the unity of the people, there are stirrings of resentment among the people against the perpetuation of a system in which these aristocrats do not perform recognizable services at commensurate incomes. But such resentment does not mean that the peasantry are dry tinder for the spark of Communism to set alight. Communism as yet does not seem to have any great attraction for the mass of the local peasantry of the South East Asian region. The lack of popular response to the Malayan insurrection has shown this. It is presumably true to say that the interest of the peasant can always be secured in any movement which promises to give him greater control of the land—more land more secure tenure, freedom from land debt, and better returns for his produce. But to most of the Indonesian peasants these aims are likely to be sought in nationalism, which can be largely given both an ethnic base and the religious sanctions of Islam. The person to whom the cry for a solution of the land problem is likely to make a most definite appeal, especially in Malaya, is not the Indonesian but the Chinese peasant, who sees himself as excluded from full participation in the land rights of the country folk. Over and over again one hears the cry, ill-founded as it is, that the Chinese have not been allowed to grow rice in Malaya.

Here may well come one of the acute pressure points in the South East Asian scene. The analysis might go as follows. Nationalism is a powerful political force because of its appeal to the individual in a projected, enlarged form of his desires and strivings. But by itself it is an aggressive rather than a constructive force. It lacks a coherent theory for the use of the resources at its control. An ideology containing such theory, and an equally ardent emotional charge on the part of many of its adherents, is provided by Communism. If Communism can work through nationalism it has a most powerful combination. Yet Communism in South East Asia lacks organization of any scale. The optimum conditions for its success are